

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OC-05 CCO-00 OCL-00 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 H-02 OPR-02

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P 181432Z SEP 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3576

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0800

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS PINT ET US

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND TO SEPT. 17 INCIDENT AT KAGNEW TRACT DELTA

REF: A. ASMARA 0779 B. ASMARA 0784 C. ASMARA 0789

D. NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA 141725Z SEP 75

1. ON SATURDAY, SEPT. 13, AFTER DETERMINING ABDUCTION
(REF A) OF TWO U.S. OPERATORS AND SIX ETHIOPIAN KAGNEW
EMPLOYEES AND MAKING ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE TO SITE,
OIC NAVCOMMUNIT AND PARTY DEPARTED SITE AT 1500, AS EPMG
SECURITY FORCE HAD DEPARTED SHORTLY BEFORE. OIC AND
PARTY MOVED SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY BACK ALONG UNPAVED ROAD,
AND WERE WITHIN HEARING RANGE HAD THERE BEEN ANY FIRING
AT TRACT DELTA UNTIL AT LEAST 1530. EPMG AUTHORITIES
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HAVE OFFERED CONFLICTING REPORTS ON TIME OF ARRIVAL

AT DELTA OF SECOND ETHIOPIAN ARMY SECURITY DETACHMENT;
ONE REPORTING ARRIVAL AT 1700, OTHER AT 1830.

2. ON SUNDAY, SEPT 14. OIC AND PARTY OF TECHNICIANS
FROM PA&E PREPARED TO RETURN TO SITE UNDER ORDERS FROM
CINCUSNAVEUR TO ESTIMATE EXTENT OF DAMAGE TO TRACT DELTA
AND TO DETERMINE TIME NECESSARY TO PUT TRANSMITTER SITE
BACK INTO OPERATION. OIC AND PARTY WERE COMPELLED TO
WAIT ON ADI UGRI ROAD ALMOST THREE HOURS FOR PROMISED
EPMG ESCORT FORCE TO ARRIVE. ON FINALLY DEPARTING WITH
ESCORT FOR TRACT DELTA, OIC WAS INFORMED THAT THERE WAS
"ELECTRICAL" FIRE AT SITE. UPON ARRIVING AT SITE AT 1530,
OIC FOUND EXTENSIVE DAMAGE AS DESCRIBED IN REF B AND D.

3. ALTHOUGH EPMG TROOPS GUARDING SITE CLAIMED THAT
DESTRUCTION WAS CAUSED BY FRONT (ELF"PLF) FORCES WHO
ARRIVED AT DELTA WITHIN 15 MINUTES OF OIC'S PARTY'S DEPARTURE
ON SATURDAY, OIC AND PA&E TECHNICIANS IMMEDIATELY SUSPECTED
EPMG TROOPS HAD CAUSED DESTRUCTION. REASONS FOR THESE
SUSPICIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. TIME AVAILABLE TO INSURGENTS (BETWEEN ONE-AND-
HALF TO THREE HOURS) WAS NOT ADEQUATE TO ACCOUNT FOR
WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION;

B. IF INSURGENTS WERE RESPONSIBLE THEY WOULD NOT
HAVE WASTED TIME IN LOOTING PERSONAL LOCKERS, AND
ATTEMPTING TO FORCE SAFE (WHICH WAS FOUND INTACT ON SUNDAY);

C. IF EPMG TROOPS' STORY WAS TRUE, WHY DID THEY
NOT REPORT FIRE ON SITE SATURDAY EVENING WHEN THEY ARRIVED
ON SITE; AND

D. IT SEEMS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT INSURGENTS WOULD
RETURN TO DELTA DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS WHEN THERE WAS SO
MUCH INTEREST AND ACTIVITY AT SITE THROUGHOUT THAT DAY.
AWARENESS THESE SUSPICIONS AND EPMG TROOPS' EMBARRASSMENT
WERE PROBABLY FACTOR IN HARASSMENT OF OIC AND PA&E TECHS
WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO DEPART DELTA SUNDAY AFTERNOON
(REF D).

4. CONGEN HAS DISCUSSED THESE SUSPICIONS WITH SEVERAL
SENIOR AND EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES OF BOTH PA&E AND CISCO,
AS WELL AS OIC. SUSPICIONS OF EPMG TROOPS' ROLE IN
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DESTRUCTION OF TRACT DELTA WERE WIDESPREAD AMONG
NAVCOMMUNIT AND DOD-CONTRACT PERSONNEL. LIKEWISE EPMG
SUTHORITIES MAY HAVE BEEN DEFENSIVE ABOUT ANY POSSIBLE
ETHIOPIAN ARMY COMPLICITY IN DESTRUCTION, ALTHOUGH SECOND
DIVISION CHIEF OF STAFF, COL. TELAHUN, SHARPLY DISMISSED
ANY SUCH IMPLICATIONS IN DISCUSSION MONDAY WITH OIC.
SEPT. 13/14 INCIDENT APPRECIABLY HEIGHTENED CLIMATE OF
MUTUAL HOSTILITY AND MISTRUST BETWEEN AMERICANS AT

KAGNEW AND EPMG TROOPS AND AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE
FOR SECURITY AT DELTA.

5. ON TUESDAY, SEPT 16, OIC AND WORK PARTY RETURNED TO
TRACT DELTA TO REMOVE EQUIPMENT AND WAS SUCCESSFUL IN
SALVAGING SEVERAL TRANSMITTERS, ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT
AND APRTS. OIC'E PARTY ALSO CLEANED UP SITE AND EXPRESSED
HOPE TO EPMG SECURITY DETACHMENT THAT "INSURGENTS WOULD
NOT RETURN AND AGAIN MESS SITE UP." THERE WERE
NO INCIDENTS WITH EPMG TROOPS TUESDAY.

6. WHEN OIC AND AMERICAN WORK PARTY, DRAWN FROM
BOTH CIVILIANS AND U.S. MILITARY, SET OUT FOR TRACT DELTA
ON WEDNESDAY, ALL WERE AWARE THAT THIS WOULD BE LAST VISIT
TO ILL-FATED SITE FROM WHICH FOUR OF THEIR FRIENDS AND
CO-WORKERS WERE ABDUCTED AND RETURNING FROM WHICH TWO
WERE KILLED. ENTHUSIASM IN DESTROYING TRANSMITTERS AND
THEN WINDOWS AT SITE MAY HAVE BECOME TOO EFFUSIVE, WHILE
EPMG TROOPS, WHO MAY HAVE FELT TAIN OF SUSPICIONS OF
LOOTING AND INDISCIPLINE, FURTHER SAW THEIR "SPOILS OF WAR"
BEING EITHER CARTED OFF OR BEING DESTROYED. ALL THESE
FACTORS WERE DEFINITELY CONTRIBUTORY TO INCIDENT WHICH
DID ARISE ON SEPT. 17.
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